

UK Advisory Forum (Northern Ireland) - 29 March 2017

Attendees

Charlie Massey, GMC Chief Executive (Chair)
Susan Goldsmith, GMC Chief Operating Officer & Deputy Chief Executive
Lady Christine Eames, GMC Council member
Alan Walker, GMC Head of Northern Ireland Affairs
Paul Buckley, GMC Director of Strategy and Communication
Dr Paddy Woods, Department of Health
Dr Charlie Martyn, South Eastern HSC Trust
Heather Moorhead, NI Confederation of Health and Social Care
Dr Grainne Doran, Royal College of General Practitioners Northern Ireland
Dr Margaret O'Brien, Health and Social Care Board
Dr Paul Darragh, British Medical Association Northern Ireland
Heather Monteverde, Macmillan Cancer Support
Professor Pascal McKeown, Queen's University Belfast
Olive MacLeod, Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority

Others present

Shane Carmichael, GMC Assistant Director, Strategy and Communications
Emma-Jayne Wright, GMC NI Office Administrator
Dr Sarah Lawson, NI Medical and Dental Training Agency ADEPT Clinical Leadership Fellow
Dr Danielle Leemon, NI Medical and Dental Training Agency ADEPT Clinical Leadership Fellow
Dr Lyndsay Thompson, NI Medical and Dental Training Agency ADEPT Clinical Leadership Fellow
Dr Judy Curran, NI Medical and Dental Training Agency ADEPT Clinical Leadership Fellow

Welcome

- 1** Charlie Massey chaired the meeting and apologised that the GMC Chair, Professor Terence Stephenson, was unable to attend following surgery.
- 2** The Chair welcomed attendees to the UK Advisory Forum in Northern Ireland, including the ADEPT Clinical Leadership Fellows who observed the meeting. Lady Eames welcomed Charlie Massey to his first UKAF meeting.
- 3** The Chair took a moment to reflect on the death of Holly Beattie, a member of the GMC Northern Ireland team.

Actions and feedback from October 2016 meeting

- 4** At the UK Advisory Forum in Northern Ireland in October 2016, the GMC offered support to HSC trusts involved in recruiting a current overseas recruitment campaign of doctors from India. Since October the GMC has offered to provide a named person to assist with the registration issues associated with this recruitment campaign.
- 5** The GMC has also offered to organise additional Welcome to UK Practice workshops in 2017 to provide additional support for these and other doctors coming to Northern Ireland for the first time. The first is being held on Friday, March 31 in the Southern HSC Trust.
- 6** The roundtable event to inform our review of flexibility in training took place in February 2017, led by Charlie Massey, GMC Chief Executive and Dr Colin Melville, GMC Director of Education and Standards. The final report is due for publication by the end of March.

Updates on local priorities/areas of interest or concern from Forum members

- 7** Forum attendees were invited to provide updates on their priorities. During the discussion, the Forum noted:
 - a** The current political uncertainty in Northern Ireland was a cause of concern. Members were concerned about the potential impact on the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing 2026 vision.
 - b** The Civil Service could continue to take forward the direction of travel outlined by the previous Minister. However, the absence of an Assembly means that a budget cannot be set. This means that civil servants have limited access to funds which was causing general concern and particularly within charitable organisations involved in the delivery of health and social care.

- c** Some members raised concerns about the long term sustainability and safety of GP services. Enhanced expectations of primary care were being added to with increased management of patients affected by increased patient waiting times for appointments in secondary care. A package to implement the Review of GP led services had been agreed, but could not be implemented because of the absence of an Assembly and agreed budget.
- d** Forum attendees commented on concerns about the recruitment and retention of doctors in speciality training. An increasing number were choosing not to go into training, leaving recruitment gaps which some were concerned could impact on training posts in the future due to increased service pressures.
- e** Uncertainty over Brexit continues to cause concerns. Members mentioned the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland having a land border with another EU state. Brexit could have significant impact on planned increases in cross border delivery of services, on those coming from the EU to Northern Ireland for medical training and those already working in Northern Ireland from the EU, especially given the high numbers from the Republic of Ireland.
- f** Some members noted that they were working more closely with the GMC including in sharing information and data to support wider regulatory work.

GMC Update

- 8** The Forum received an update on key GMC issues including the GMCs progress on improving the investigation of complaints, the need for legislative and regulatory reform and taking revalidation forward following the review carried out by Sir Keith Pearson.

External Agenda Item: Developments in General Practice in Northern Ireland

- 9** The Forum received a presentation from Dr Margaret O'Brien, Head of General Medical Services at Health & Social Care Board about developments and challenges in General Practice in Northern Ireland.
- 10** This included the number of GPs in Northern Ireland and strategic goals set by the GP-led care working group to improve the overall service.
- 11** To work towards building a sustainable workforce in Northern Ireland there has been an increase in the training places available to GPs from 65 in 2015/16 to 111 in 2018, which HSCB believes can be accommodated within the current system.
- 12** It was noted that a retainer scheme had been established to support the retention of experienced GPs in Northern Ireland, which had proved successful.

- 13** The development of 17 GP Federations across NI had been a significant development and they are viewed as having an increasing future role under the implementation of Health and Wellbeing 2026 strategy.
- 14** Other initiatives include the increased roll out of Ask my GP online/phone triage system, online repeat prescribing and the roll out of over 100 Pharmacists in GP Practice, to reduce the burden on GPs.
- 15** Forum members welcomed the presentation and during discussion noted:
 - a** Increasing pressures on services and especially in out of hours GP services. Delivery of the recommendations of the Review of GP led services was necessary.
 - b** Workforce challenges which have impacted primary care recently. This included the number of GP partners approaching retirement and others choosing to retire over part-time working due a variety of reasons: cap on pensionable income, increased workload in General Practice and to a lesser degree the perceived burden of revalidation.
 - c** Increased part-time working, increased feminisation of the workforce and concerns that all GP training places may not be filled in future years were also raised as potential concerns.
 - d** It was noted that there are differing standards and understanding of GP specialities in the UK and the rest of Europe.
 - e** It was suggested that in the future the GMC should consider GP federations as approved training environments, for the advance approval of training posts. This model could be more beneficial for trainees as it could lead to better training environments and promote increased exposure and knowledge of elective pathways.

Securing the license to practise: Introducing a Medical Licencing Assessment

- 16** The Forum received an update on the development the introduction of a Medical Licencing Assessment (MLA) from Paul Buckley, GMC director of strategy and communication.
- 17** During discussion, the Forum noted:
 - a** That there would be consequences if you made the MLA your license to practice. Medical schools recognise other exams and are currently open for dialogue.
 - b** Concern was raised about the volume of the assessment and how this would be delivered on a national scale?

- c** Medical schools may feel the pressure to change their curriculum to accommodate MLA. There are some concerns that some schools could focus on training students to simply pass a test and lose their drive towards excellence. Would this affect the confidence and competence of graduating students?
 - d** Some forum members said that the GMC needed to be clearer on what specific problem they are trying to fix and how this is addressed by implementing the MLA.
 - e** Members understood that one aim of the MLA was to capture the international/European group and have the same assessment for all. It was noted that significant numbers of Northern Ireland doctors qualified in the Republic of Ireland. Such doctors could find it frustrating if required to take another exam if they studied medicine just across the border.
 - f** Forum members questioned whether the medical school accreditation from the GMC at present was beyond the level of the MLA.
 - g** In response to a query about how long the MLA accreditation would last for, members were advised that the MLA would be the mechanism for entering the register and obtaining a licence, and revalidation allows them to maintain both.
- 18** Members were advised that all of the points raised in this and our wider engagement taking place would be considered further and the GMC Council would be considering this issue further as the work is taken forward.

Chair's Closing Remarks

- 19** The Chair thanked Forum attendees for their contribution to the meeting.